DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 056 773 PS 005 167

AUTHOR Harris, Susan; Braun, John R.
TITLE Self-Esteem and Racial Preference in Black Children.
PUB DATE [71]
NOTE 6p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Elementary School Students; Lower Class; Middle Class; *Negroes; *Racial Attitudes; Racial Factors; *Self Concept; Sex Differences
IDENTIFIERS Piers Harris Childrens Self Concept Test

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the interrelation of self-esteem and racial preferences in black children. The following hypotheses were generated: (1) subjects with impaired self-concepts will be more outgroup oriented than those with unimpaired self-concepts, (2) white preferences will be greater among middle class than among lower class black children, and (3) black males will show greater white preference than black females in their choice of a black or a white puppet on each of the racial preference statements. Subjects were 60 black girls and boys, 7-8 years old, from middle class and lower class interracial schools. The instrument used to measure self-esteem was the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Test. An instrument adapted from the Clark and Clark dolls test assessed racial preference. Findings indicate a significant relationship between self-esteem and racial preference. The majority of the black children preferred the black puppet in the racial preference test. No significant difference between social class or sex of subjects was found. (Author/AJ)

ED056773

Self-esteem and racial preference in black children

Susan Harris and John R. Braun

University of Bridgeport

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Three to seven year old black children have a well developed knowledge of the concept of racial differences between "white" and "colored" as this is indicated by the characteristic of skin color (Clark, 1950). Blacks living in the south as well as the north (Clark & Clark, 1947; Morland, 1965; Stevenson, 1958; Gregor, 1964), and integrated as well as segregated children, (Goodman, 1952; Stevenson and Stewart, 1958; Gregor, 1966) consistently preferred the white color and rejected the dark color.

Butts (1963) found that black children with impaired self-concepts as measured by the California Test of Personality perceived themselves less accurately in terms of skin color. Asher and Allen (1969) have found that middle class blacks showed greater white preference than lower class blacks, and that black males are more outgroup oriented than black females.

The present study investigated the interrelation of self-esteem and racial preferences in black children. Reasoning from the previous studies the following hypotheses were generated:

1. Subjects with impaired self-concepts will be more outgroup oriented than those with unimpaired self-concepts.

2. White preference will be greater among middle class than among lower class black children.

3. There will be a significant difference between boys and girls in their choice of the black or white puppet on each of the racial preference

PS005167

statements. Black males will show greater white preference than black females.

Method

Ss were 60 black girls and boys between the ages of seven and eight. Thirty were from a middle class interracial suburban school (Media, Pennsylvania) and the remaining thirty were from a lower class interracial inner city school (Chester, Pennsylvania). All Ss were judged to be of at least normal intelligence.

Ss from the suburban school were selected from a second and third grade class list. Since the number of blacks enrolled in the school was very small, all of the black students in each of the six, second and third grade classes were included in the sample. However, in the inner city school, every fifth child who was black was selected from the class list of second and third graders.

The test instrument for self-esteem was the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Test (Piers, 1969). This 80-item "yes-no" questionnaire was read aloud to the children by the black female E. The test device for assessing racial preferences was an adaptation from the Clark and Clark (1947) dolls test. There were two pairs of puppets chosen to match as closely as possible the sex and the ages of the subjects. Within each pair, the puppets were identical except for skin and hair color. The black puppet was of medium brown facial color with black hair, and the white puppet had light skin with light hair. The puppets were placed in prone position before each child who was asked to make fixed alternative responses to each of the following questions:

1. Give me the puppet that you would like to play with.

2. Give me the puppet that is a nice puppet.

3. Give me the puppet that is a nice color.

4. Give me the puppet that looks bad.

Since research has consistently found no effects of race of the E upon performance in this situation (Hraba & Grant, 1970), this factor was not varied in the present study. A black preference choice was defined as choosing the black puppet for the racial preference statements - "play with," "nice puppet," and "nice color"; but choosing the white puppet as the one that "looks bad."

Results

The Mann-Whitney U Test indicated a significant relationship between self-esteem and racial preference. The median self-concept score for those subjects who made at least three of the four black preference choices was higher than those subjects who made less than three of the four black preference choices.(63.06 vs. 55.5; $p < .01$). Chi-square tests yielded no significant sex nor social class differences in racial preferences among black children. The majority of the black children preferred the black puppet. For example, 70% of the subjects chose the black puppet as the one that they would like to "play with," 54% chose the black puppet as the "nice puppet," and 82% chose the black puppet as the one that is a "nice color." A majority of these subjects (79%) chose the white puppet as the one that "looks bad." This finding of a preference by black children for black dolls confirms the recent results of Hraba & Grant (1970) and Fox & Barnes (1971). It is interesting to note that the median self-concept scores for the suburban (middle class) and the inner city (lower class) were at the 77th and 66th percentiles.

These black children have a viable and secure self-esteem and apparently they value the traits of their own respective group.

Discussion

It is possible that the relationship between self-esteem and racial preference may signify a new spirit of dignity in the lives of Afro-American children. Blacks who evidenced feelings of preference for their own group are experiencing at some level of awareness - self-love.

The fact that there was not a significant difference between middle and lower class subjects suggested that middle class blacks are as ethnocentric as lower class blacks. A second possibility, may be that regardless of socio-economic status, blacks who attend schools with a heterogeneous social class and racial population, compete more and develop more self-esteem (Ausubel, 1950). Hraba & Grant (1969) found that black children in interracial settings are not necessarily white oriented.

Finally, Asher and Allen (1969) stated that greater white preference of black males is a result of the general awareness of the relatively inferior position of blacks, an awareness made more salient for those enacting the male role. However, the fact that there was not a significant sex difference in the present study suggested that black males are currently as racially aware as black females.

References

Asher, S. R. & Allen, V. L. Racial preference and social comparison processes. Journal of Social Issues, 1969, 25, 157-166.

Ausubel, D. P. Ego development among segregated Negro children. Mental Hygiene, 1958, 42, 362-369.

Butts, H. F. Skin color perception and self-esteem. Journal of Negro Education, 1953, 32, 122-128.

Clark, K. B. & Clark, M. K. Racial identification and preference in Negro children. In T. M. Neucomb and E. L. Hartley (Eds), Readings in Social Psychology New York: Holt, 1947, 169-178.

Clark, K. B. Emotional factors in racial identification and preference in Negro children. Journal of Negro Education, 1950, 19, 341-350.

Fox, D. M., & Barnes, U. B. Racial preference and identification of black, Chinese, and white children. Paper presented at American Educational Research Association meetings, N. Y., 1971.

Goodman, M. E. Race Awareness in Young Children. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1952.

Gregor, A. Integrated schools and Negro character development. Psychiatry, 1964, 24, 69-72.

Gregor, A. Racial attitudes among white and Negro children in a deep south metropolitan area. Journal of Social Psychology, 1966, 68, 95-100.

Hraba, J., & Grant, G. Black is beautiful: a reexamination of racial preference and identification. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1970, 16, 398-402.

Morland, J. K. Racial recognition by nursery school children in Lynchburg, Virginia. Social Forces, 1958, 37, 132-135.

PS 005167

Piers, E. V. Manual for the Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale. Nashville: Counselor Recordings and Tapes, 1969.

Stevenson, H. W., & Stewart, E. C. A developmental study of racial awareness in young children. Child Development, 1958, 29, 399-409.